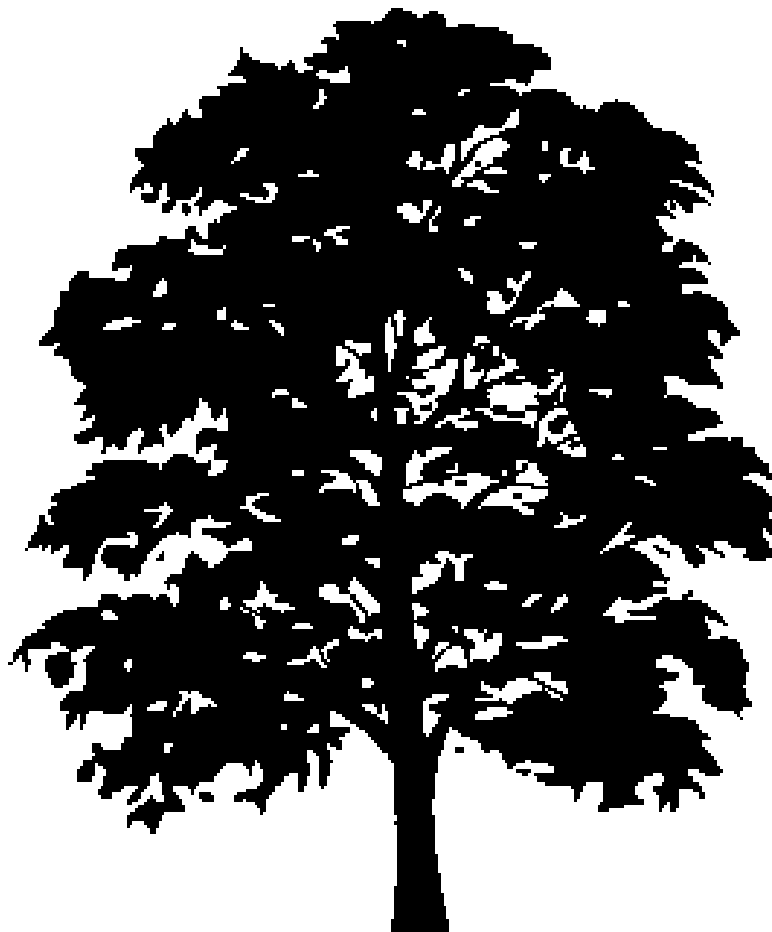


**TOMPKINS COUNTY**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
2003 Annual Report



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# **TOMPKINS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL 2003 ANNUAL REPORT**

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## **ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

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The Tompkins County Environmental Management Council (EMC) was created in 1971 by a resolution of the County Board of Representatives (BOR). In 2003 the EMC was formally added to the County's Charter.

The EMC acts as an advisory body to the Legislature on matters affecting the preservation, development and use of the natural features of the County. The EMC identifies problems, proposes priorities and coordinates activities in the development and management of our natural resources. It provides a public forum for the discussion of issues related to the natural environment in Tompkins County.

Staff and equipment are shared between the EMC and the Tompkins County Planning Department. In 2003, the EMC reported directly to the Tompkins County Legislature's Planning, Development & Environmental Quality Committee (PDEQ). County Representative Dooley Kiefer served as the Legislature's liaison to the EMC.

Stephen Nicholson served as Chair of the EMC in 2003. Kenny Christianson, Karen Edelstein, and Herb Engman were appointed as Vice Chairs. Mr. Nicholson reported to the PDEQ Committee on the EMC's activities and goals throughout the year. He also drafted correspondence on behalf of the EMC and served as the group's primary liaison to the Legislature.

Heather Filiberto served as the EMC Coordinator in 2003. The Coordinator provides organizational and technical assistance to the Council and assists in coordinating EMC activities with other governmental advisory boards, County departments and the Legislature.

*The EMC News* completed its tenth year of publication in 2003. The *News* is an important form of communication that is used to introduce resolutions, make announcements, provide committee reports and update members and other interested parties on the activities of the EMC each month.

EMC members are appointed by the County Legislature to serve two-year terms. All twelve at-large seats were filled in 2003. Ten municipal members (out of sixteen) also served. Members have a variety of backgrounds and levels of expertise. Municipal representatives provide an important link between countywide and local issues. Seven associate members were appointed to participate on EMC committees.

EMC members participate on the Council by attending monthly general meetings, working in task-oriented committees, and serving as liaisons for other committees or organizations. Seven committees were formed at the organizational meeting at the beginning of 2003: Education, Environmental Review, Energy, Hudson River PCBs, Pesticide Neighbor Notification, Public Safety Communications System, and Water Monitoring.

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## RESOLUTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

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The EMC passed six resolutions in 2003. The first resolution was passed in January, honoring Susan Hajda Brock and expressing appreciation for the three years she served as Chair of the EMC.

The second resolution passed in June, recommended support of New York State net metering legislation that would require electrical corporations to interconnect to residential, commercial, and municipal on-site wind and solar generation systems, allowing them to sell excess electricity back to the grid. On June 17<sup>th</sup>, The County Legislature, on recommendation of the EMC, passed a similar resolution in support of net metering.

Also in June a third resolution passed, recommending adoption of the Local Action Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions for County Government Operations. The Local Action Plan was adopted by the County Legislature on July 13<sup>th</sup>. This is the third milestone of the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign, a voluntary program for municipal governments to help combat global warming at the local level by working through a five step process to identify and implement reduction measures. In Step 1, an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions was completed in 2001 that supplied baseline data and forecasts for the County. In Step 2, a target was adopted in 2002 by the Board of Representatives calling for a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from County government operations by 2008.

In September the EMC's fourth resolution of 2003 was passed, recommending support for the Fingerlakes Forest Consensus. A consortium of concerned citizens and organizations has signed the Consensus and forwarded it in the form of comments on the Finger Lakes National Forest Long-Range Management Plan update. The consensus promotes preserving the FLNF for wildlife, non-destructive recreation, and long-term ecological and community benefits.

Also in September a fifth resolution was passed, recommending adoption of a County SEQR Type 1 Action List. The State Environmental Quality Review Act allows municipalities to adopt their own lists of additional Type 1 Actions that require a Full Environmental Assessment form to be used to determine the environmental significance of those actions. The Legislature's Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee discussed the recommendation and decided not to take any action on the matter.

In December the EMC passed a sixth resolution, recommending preservation of the Cornell Redbud Woods. This was sent to Cornell University President Jeffrey Lehman and other staff members. Copies were provided to the Ithaca Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The EMC also sent official correspondence in 2003. In May a letter was sent to Dick Fischer wishing him well in his retirement. Mr. Fischer served on the Environmental Management Council for over 20 years, beginning in 1973.

In November a letter was to sent to New York State Senator John R. Kuhl expressing opposition to proposed amendments to the agriculture and market laws in relation to unlawful tampering with animal activities.

### **MUNICIPAL PARTICIPATION**

The EMC scheduled quarterly municipal reports in 2003 to give EMC municipal representatives an opportunity to report on activities or concerns in their respective municipalities. The reports facilitated communication on environmental issues and gave municipalities an opportunity to utilize the skills and resources of the EMC.

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## SPECIAL MEETINGS AND PRESENTATIONS

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Ed Marx, Planning Commissioner, spoke at the January meeting about the efforts being undertaken to the County's Comprehensive Plan. The EMC provided general comments on the purpose statement and identified potential issues to be addressed in the Plan.

In March, Mikel Shakarjian provided an update on the status of the County's public safety communications system.

At the April Meeting, EMC member Christian Nielsen-Palacios gave members a primer on green building design. Christian is an architect with an interest in sustainable buildings.

In May, Professor Gary Evans, from the College of Human Ecology at Cornell University, attended the EMC meeting. He spoke about his research on the influence of the physical environment on psychological health, particularly how poor physical environments impact child and family well-being.

Andy Zepp, Executive Director of the Finger Lakes Land Trust, joined EMC members at the June meeting. He spoke on conservation in Tompkins County and the current strategic planning process the Land Trust is undergoing.

In July, Sue Ritter, a Planner for the Town of Ithaca, updated the EMC on local efforts to implement conservation zones for open space preservation in the Town of Ithaca. The Town's Conservation Advisory Board used the EMC's Unique Natural Areas Inventory as a starting point to identify candidate areas for further analysis, which led to the incorporation of conservation zones to provide additional review requirements and protection measures for specific environmentally sensitive lands.

At the September meeting, Kathryn Engel, from the Forest Watch Congress, spoke about the update process for the Finger Lakes National Forest Plan and presented background information on the Forest Consensus, which

promotes a healthier long-range management plan for the forest. The EMC passed a resolution, on recommendation of the Environmental Review Committee, in support of the Consensus.

Abigail Krich spoke at the November meeting about renewable energy projects and advocacy at Cornell University. Abby is President of Cornell University's student group Kyoto Now! and a member of the Cornell Solar Decathlon Team.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

The EMC remained active with the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils (NYSAEMC). EMC members attended the annual NYSAEMC sponsored Department of Environmental Conservation update in Albany on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

Steve Nicholson became an at-large director of NYSAEMC in 2003, and EMC associate member Mikel Shakarjian continued to serve as vice-president.

The EMC Coordinator and four EMC members attended the NYSAEMC annual conference that was held in Buffalo in October. We also received a conference scholarship from the NYSAEMC that enabled Abigail Krich, a student at Cornell University, to attend the conference. The conference theme in 2003 was "Sustainable Living with Renewable Energy". The Tompkins County EMC prepared a display board highlighting their energy efficiency accomplishments that included an overview of the library solar panels project and the completion of the County's Local Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As in years past, the Tompkins County EMC continues to be at the forefront of current events and present itself as a role model to other, smaller, EMCs around the state.

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## COMMITTEE & LIAISON ACTIVITIES

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### Education Committee

The Education Committee participated in the annual Earth Day celebration on April 27<sup>th</sup> in DeWitt Park. Their display focused on the environmental and health dangers of backyard burning. Dioxin Man made a guest appearance where he simulated burning household trash in a burn barrel to illustrate the ease at which burning household trash produces Dioxin, a dangerous and polluting chemical.

The Education Committee organized four clean-ups on the EMC's Adopt-A-Highway designated portion of New York State Route 13 between Warren Road and Route 366. The first annual Golden Hardhat Award was given to member Joyce Gerbasi for her dedication and participation in the Adopt-A-Highway clean-up program.

Throughout the year, the Education Committee followed state legislation on banning burn barrels and the mitigation for the library solar panels as a result of construction of the proposed Green Street Garage.

### Environmental Review Committee

The Environmental Review Committee (ERC) met six times to review and comment on projects that could potentially impact the environment in Tompkins County. The committee brings a wide variety of perspectives to bear on project reviews. Through this perspective, the committee tries to advocate for environmentally sound development. Committee actions included:

- Comments to the Water Resources Council on their recommendations for regulation of personal watercraft.
- Preparation of a draft SEQR Type I Action list for the County, a resolution recommending adoption of the list, and review of the proposed amendments to the County's SEQR Administrative Policy.
- Discussion with the County's Capital Program Coordinator and SEQR review for the construction of a monopole communication tower at the 911 Center.
- Comments to the Town of Ithaca on the proposed Remington Inn & Restaurant; and the update of the Town's Zoning Ordinance. The committee was impressed by the new conservation zones, which recognize many EMC-designated Unique Natural Areas.
- Comments to Cornell University on the proposed athletic fields.
- Draft comments on proposed mercury storage at the former Seneca Army Depot. These were not forwarded because it became clear that the property owner would not allow the proposed use.
- Presentation from Katherine Engel of Finger Lakes Forest Watch Congress and preparation of a resolution of support that was passed by EMC.
- Letter of support regarding the City of Ithaca coal tar cleanup.
- Review and comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Intermunicipal Wastewater Treatment Agreement. The committee also drafted an Op-Ed article on this agreement, which was subsequently approved by the EMC for submission to local papers. The Chair of the EMC later withdrew the submission.
- Comments on the SEQR review for the State snowmobile grant program. A request for further consideration and comment on any potential negative impacts of snowmobile trail use in Unique Natural Areas was forwarded to the Unique Natural Areas Subcommittee.
- Drafted a letter that was sent by the EMC to Senator Kuhl in opposition to the Ecoterrorism Bill that proposed amendments to the agriculture and market laws in relation to unlawful tampering with animal activities.
- Drafted a resolution in support of preserving the Redbud Woods, which was passed by the EMC.

### **Energy Committee**

The Energy Committee drafted a resolution in support of State net metering legislation, which was also passed by the County Legislature. The Committee continued to provide support and guidance for the County's Cities for Climate Protection Campaign. The third step outlined in the campaign, developing a Local Action Plan, was completed and adopted by the County Legislature in 2003.

The Committee prepared a memo outlining potential mitigation options the County could pursue in ongoing negotiations with the City of Ithaca regarding the loss of capability from the solar panels located on the roof of the Tompkins County Public Library as a result of shading from the proposed Green Street Garage adjacent to the Library. The Committee presented renewable energy information at the Lansing Energy Fair and the Earth Day Celebration in Ithaca. Committee members spent much time planning for a countywide energy conference in 2004.

### **Hudson River PCB Committee**

This committee was created in response to a request from the Niagara County EMC asking for support in their efforts to keep PCB-contaminated material from the Hudson River/General Electric clean-up from being transported across the state and landfilled in Niagara County (where the only hazardous waste landfill licensed to accept PCBs in the northeast is located). The committee continues to gather information and keep abreast of this issue.

### **Pesticide Neighbor Notification Committee**

This committee participated in a larger Neighborhood Notification Law working group to assist with the implementation of the County law that went into effect in 2003. The working group, made up of representatives from Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the County Departments of Weights and Measures and

Environmental Health, prepared educational brochures and conducted four educational meetings throughout the year for pesticide sprayers, retailers, and the general public.

### **Public Safety Communications System Committee**

This committee expects to be active in 2004 when the County's capital project moves forward.

### **Water Monitoring Committee**

This committee continued to work on gathering lake water monitoring information.

### **EMC Liaisons**

EMC members served as liaisons to the Cornell Community Waste Management Advisory Committee, Cornell Lake Source Cooling Data Sharing Group, Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, and the Tompkins County Water Resources Council. Liaisons attended and participated in meetings, and reported back to the EMC. The liaison positions for the Intermunicipal Organization for Cayuga Lake Management Plan and the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board remained vacant in 2003.

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## 2003 EMC MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

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### **Appointed EMC Members and Representation**

Susan Brock	At-Large
Kenneth Christianson	At-Large
Barbara Ebert	At-Large
Karen Edelstein	At-Large
Herb Engman	At-Large
Dan Lamb	At-Large
Ashley Miller	At-Large
Christian Nielsen-Palacios	At-Large
Daniel Pearlstein	At-Large
Carolyn Shapiro	At-Large
Steven Uzman	At-Large
Roger Yonkin	At-Large
Stephen Nicholson	Town of Caroline
Robert Roe	Town of Danby
Joyce Gerbasi	Town of Dryden
Byron Unsworth	Town of Ithaca
Larry Sharpsteen	Town of Lansing
Donna Jean Darling	Town of Newfield
Christian Boissonnas	Town of Ulysses
David Woodard	Village of Cayuga Heights
Mandy Kittelberger	Village of Freeville
John Dennis	Village of Lansing

### **Associate Members**

Walter Buble	Susan Kerns Robinson
Peter Harriott	Mikel Shakarjian
Nancy Ostman	Tania Schusler
Dooley Kiefer, County Legislature Liaison	

### **EMC Staff**

Heather Filiberto	EMC Coordinator
Dariele Drake	EMC Principal Account Clerk
Kathy Wilsea	EMC Secretary